



A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/1L: The quest for political stability: Germany, 1871–1991
Report on the Examination

7042
June 2019

Version: 1.0

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General

Overall, there were some very encouraging responses to the paper this year. Students seemed to be much more confident than in previous years as to what was required, particularly in terms of question 01. In response to this extract question, there was some good awareness of arguments and evidence of sound contextual own knowledge to support and criticise these. In the essay questions in Section B, it was clear that many students could think effectively across a broad period of history, selecting relevant examples to support a case and providing substantiated individual judgement.

However, it still needs to be remembered that component 1 is a breadth study and that students need to be familiar with concepts such as continuity and change so as to be able to address a time period which of 20 years or more. In writing breadth responses, knowledge needs to be deployed carefully and selectively. More able students had a good appreciation of chronology and covered the full range of dates indicated in the questions. These students used well-selected and appropriate supporting evidence and consequently were able to make convincing arguments and judgements.

Section A

Question 01

There were some very effective answers to the extract question this year. Most students structured their work appropriately and considered in turn how convincing each of the extracts were. It seems to have become common practice to address the overall argument of the extract first before considering the elements of the extract in terms of support and challenge, and offering an overall judgement. This can be very effective, although other approaches focusing on the overall argument and the sub-arguments can work equally well. Some less effective responses summarised everything the extract said, whilst even less successful answers often adopted a line-by-line approach with no real feel for the overall view being expressed.

Students need to remember that the comment on the overall argument should reflect the the focus of the question in 01. The focus this year was Bismarck's ability to control the Reichstag. The presentation of the analysis suggesting why the extract was or was not convincing sometimes turned into a list of points, identifying only elements of the argument and then fact-checking these against the student's own knowledge. More able students looked at the whole arguments within the extracts and then evaluated these within the context of own knowledge.

Extract A conveyed the view that opposition from the Centre Party to the government and Bismarck was strong and contributed to him losing control of the Reichstag. Extract B's argument was that opposition to the government from the Socialists gained in strength despite Bismarck's attempts to crush them, and eventually the influence of the Socialists in the Reichstag contributed to Bismarck's downfall. Extract C expressed the view that there was tension and conflict between Bismarck and the National Liberals in the 1870s, but he was able to defeat them over the issue of tariffs after which they became a compliant party and abandoned any opposition to the government. There was some good contextual knowledge deployed to help support the evaluations of these extracts and it was good to find that most students avoided unnecessarily extensive contextual descriptions.

There were, of course, sub-arguments within each extract and the ability to identify these and evaluate them in relation to the focus became a key discriminator on this paper. Less able students tended to develop incidental information, for example the causes, events and results of the

Kulturkampf, or misquoted from the extracts, making their comments unconvincing. Some students needed to be more selective in applying their own knowledge around the focus of the question and the extract content itself. The failure of the Kulturkampf, for example, indicated little about Bismarck's ability to control the Reichstag.

Section B

Question 02

There were some excellent answers to this question from students who understood that this was a social question about the changing nature of society between 1900 to 1929. The more able students were able to deploy knowledge that indicated the varying fortunes of different sections of society, from the elites to farmers, and/or indicated developments that would affect society such as welfare reforms or cultural changes. Some students concentrated too heavily on political and economic developments and were keen to write about the Ruhr crisis, hyperinflation, Stresemann and the Rentenmark. Of course such events had an impact on society, but the key focus needed to be the extent of social and cultural change. The most effective responses were those which made distinctions between the significant changes brought about by the impact of the First World War and the creation of the Weimar Republic and the other factors, such as industrialisation. More effective answers also addressed continuity in terms of class division and divide between urban and rural areas. Given this was a breadth paper, students needed to be aware of the main social trends that occurred between 1900 and 1929 and relate these to the key idea of continuity and change. Having an appropriate range of ideas with selected supporting evidence to explain them was vital. Too many students chose to describe the cultural changes that occurred in the Weimar Republic, when what was needed was a consideration of how far such developments affected society generally.

Question 03

This was a popular question which focused on economics during two distinct time periods: the Nazis in the 1930s and West Germany after the Second World War. The main discriminator here was the quality of argument as to which period was the 'more impressive'. The development of the economy in Germany and how it changes over time is a key question within the specification. The most effective answers were able to provide good support for and against the economic strength of both periods and so produce a substantiated conclusion as to which was the more impressive. Some reflected on the greater support the West German government received after World War Two from allies and contrasted this with the Nazis who were largely forced to rely on their own resources. Less effective responses tended to develop one period more than the other, so their answers were imbalanced. They also tended to go beyond the timeframes indicated in the question, so there was much about Nazi economics during World War Two, when the question was clearly restricted to the Nazis in the 1930s. Clearly, some students needed to plan more effectively and some needed to link back to the focus of the question more continuously throughout their response. As with all Component 1 essays, an appreciation of chronology and the ability to select and deploy appropriate own knowledge in support of arguments were the key differentiating factors.

Question 04

This was a popular question and many students were able to develop a balanced assessment, constructing an argument to support or criticise how effective democracy was established in West Germany in the years 1949 to 1969. Most students took a chronological approach and though

some responses were a little mechanical, they generally had a reasonable range of ideas with some balance. The most effective responses considered key developments such as the Basic Law, safeguards and the stability of the three-party system as examples of effective democracy. Good balance was often achieved through consideration of 'chancellor democracy' or extra parliamentary opposition in the 1960s. Less effective responses took a more literal approach and saw such things as student protest and use of emergency laws as suggesting there was no democracy. More effective responses were able to see these in the context of a more mature democracy in action and recognised a government that was able to cope with troubles without resorting to the extremism of the past. There were issues with students developing ideas beyond the clearly stated timeframe of 1949 to 1969, most of which was not creditworthy. Once again, it is important to remember that component 1 is a breadth study. Students not only had to be able to support their arguments but also needed to get the balance of that support right. For example, some students unnecessarily described all the events surrounding the *Der Spiegel* Affair in great detail. The most successful answers explicitly set out a view in their opening paragraph and developed this throughout their answer, whilst linking back to the focus of the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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